

## THE MYSTERY OF A CHURCH BELL.

An old time incident in a West Virginia village—A singular coincidence.

Thirty years ago, in the environs of a little Virginia hamlet on the banks of the upper Monongahela—a region whose people had not been disturbed by the aggressions of the commercial world—stood an old mill of the primitive type, gray with the attrition of years. Time out of mind, this mill had ground (not unlike the mills of God) for the bread of this somewhat little village and for the simple farmers who dwelt among the surrounding hills. The venerable structure had seen better days. It had been at least once washed away and replaced; and succeeding owners had patched and remodeled it till little was left of the original save the water that turned the wheel.

Millers had come and gone with the years, but at the time whereof this is written it was rugged old English Sully, a man between sixty and seventy—a hard-headed vigorous old Viking—who owned the mill, opened and shut the sluice-gates and tolled the "grists" that came to him on the backs of the country horses. Father Sully was a sort of patriarch, the head of a large family of grown-up sons, all closely related—his wife himself—to the original Adam. But whatever he had been in earlier life, he was now a devout Methodist and a faithful sexton of the M. E. church which stood at the eastern border of the village, some half-mile distant from the mill which sat at the foot of a precipitous hill that frowned on the river and carried on its level summit, several acres in extent, the village graveyard. He was a familiar figure about the village; a robust, somewhat reserved old man, rather grayer with his trade than with age.

It happened one summer day when the mill was running, that Father Sully, in adjusting a belt, fell through an opening in the floor through which the main shaft came up, and as fate would have it, dropped straight into the jaws of the master wheel and shaft cage and was ground to instant death between their cruel teeth. A single cry was all he had time for; and those who ran to his aid found him clutched through the middle by the now motionless wheels, his face convulsed with the death agony and the wide-open, lifeless eyes staring upward at them with a horror they did not soon forget.

Up to the village, while this was happening, people were sitting down to the mid-day meal. Suddenly the bell in the M. E. church tower rang out sharp and resonant, and a moment later there came a more surprising, but nobody was especially startled, for it was supposed to be the work of children while cleaning was going on in the church. But persons directly across the street from one about the building, were curious enough to want to know who had rung the bell. They went across, and found the door locked. While one was about to go back, another, who was observing, the door having been opened and nobody appearing, the interior, including the belfry, was carefully explored. The windows were found closed. The bell and ropes were as motionless as if they had hung undisturbed for ages. There was nothing to indicate the recent presence of a living soul. It was clearly impossible that any one could have gotten away with our being seen. The explorers were mystified.

A few minutes later word was received in the village of the awful fate that had befallen Father Sully at the mill. It was soon found on comparison of time that the two incidents had occurred at just about the same hour—in fact, at almost the same moment, as early as the time could be computed. It was a curious and so startling coincidence, the discussion of which quickly threw the village into a fever of wonder and conjecture. The longer the matter was canvassed the more the mystery and excitement grew.

The night that followed was stormy. Rain fell heavily before midnight; the thunder crashed; the wind blew in gusts and fitful gusts. There was no moon, and save for the lightning flashes the darkness was absolute. Just on the turn of the night the bell in the church tower rang out a peal, followed by a half dozen other strokes at intervals of a minute, after the manner of tolling the dead. It would be impossible to describe the excitement, even conjecture, into which many were thrown by the doubtful and unearthly clangor. If Jefferson thought there was such a terror in a "fire bell in the night," what should be said of a midnight bell in such a night as this, tolled (as some believed) by the ghost of the sexton, who but a few hours before had been overtaken by an agonizing death. Lights quickly flashed up in the windows; people came to their doors; some dragged and went into the streets to see what their neighbors thought of matters.

There is in human nature a strain of natural superstition that education and enlightenment, even familiarity with science, cannot always rid us of. It is a heritage, not quite lost, of a remote and ruder age. Many of these people had grown up in an atmosphere hazy with ancient superstitions, and in their secret hearts believed in all sorts of nocturnal manifestations from the other world. The devil, to them, had a personal existence; and ghosts, banshees and witches had been cherished subjects of belief from a credulous and unlettered childhood. It is therefore not strange that at this unseasonable hour, when the bell tolled in such a night as this, they should have been so easily misled by the suggestion of a supernatural cause, as they stood grouped in the dark and storm, cold chills should creep along their spinal columns, and convulsed the muscles of their faces. From the crowd came into the main group carrying a lantern, who declared his purpose to go to the church and unravel the mystery, even if he had to go alone. Some of them plucked up courage to go with him. Keys were procured, and the procession, headed by him with the lantern, went to the church. But it was the story of the mid-day search over again. The building was unlocked, the windows unopened, the belfry empty, the rope and bell in repose. The searchers climbed up to the bell but found nothing in or about it. The bell was as motionless as the pulley and the bell rope. Who or what had tolled the bell was as profound a mystery as ever; and as the party left the church, some members of it cast fearful glances back over their shoulders, fully expecting to see the familiar figure of the old sexton in his accustomed attitude, standing in the vestibule, with uplifted hand holding the bell-rope. Had there been a stroke of the bell at that instant, more than one of the retiring investigators would have fallen dead from terror.

There was little sleep in the village the rest of the night. The next day, and for many days, the mystery of the village alone but in the surrounding villages; and as the bell tolled while the old man was being borne to the grave on the hill, every stroke sent shivers through many of the cottages, who could not save themselves from the feeling that there was some dread connection between the occupant of the coffin and the bell in the tower.

Two or three old men in the village, who had not forgotten that they were once boys, shook their sagacious gray heads and surmised that somehow they could not guess how the manipulation of that midnight bell had been the work of mischievous boys. And perhaps these wise old men were not far astray. Dear old friends of my youth! If it were not that they have been for these many years asleep in the old graveyard on the hilltop, the writer of this could give them "points" that would lend cohesion and strength to their surmises.

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## JACK'S CAKE.

He may have dreamed Over It, Hardy Sweetly However.

Two girls, both pretty as a newly blown rose, dressed fashionably, and talkative as a photograph, occupied seats in an outboard avenue car, says the Kansas City Journal.

"Do tell me about Neil's wedding," said the pretty creature in the military blue suit. "Did it go off well? And how?"

"Oh, beautifully!" said the other lovely bit of femininity, seated in the new dress of new spring jacket suits. "My dress was perfectly lovely, and my hair kept its curl as perfectly as if it was attending only an old maid's tea party."

"My, how nice; but tell me about Neil's wedding."

"The wedding was splendid. I actually wanted to help her dress for the ceremony, as if I hadn't my bridesmaid's toilet to think of! I am afraid that Neil is too selfish to make ready a good wife."

"Then she will naturally have an unselfish husband, my dear."

"Perhaps so. Oh, it was delightful to walk up the aisle and feel that everybody was gazing at you."

"Yes, I know. But tell me, how did Neil get through the ceremony?"

"I really don't know. My mind was full of one awful thought. I was standing with my back to all of those people and there was no telling but that my gown was crumpled after that long drive to the church."

"Oh, probably, it was all right. Was Neil's gown?"

"And wasn't it too bad that Jack was out of town and could not see how lovely I looked?"

"Oh, well, you can send him a photograph of yourself, I suppose you have one taken?"

"For what going away? But, then, even an engaged man must attend to business, you know, my dear."

"It wasn't only that. I was subconsciously behaving. You see I wanted him to share some of the festivities, so I sent him a box of wedding cake. And you should have seen the look I got in return. It was just too horrid for anything."

"But perhaps the cake disagreed with him."

"It wasn't that. You know I thought it would be nice to write him a nice, sweet little note and slip it in the bottom of the cake box, so that when he

had eaten the cake he would have a pleasant surprise."

"Good gracious, do you mean to say that you gave the box away and never knew?"

"No, I don't. The—well, the truth is that those horrid postoffice men actually made poor Jack pay for such a night as this, tolled (as some believed) by the ghost of the sexton, who but a few hours before had been overtaken by an agonizing death. Lights quickly flashed up in the windows; people came to their doors; some dragged and went into the streets to see what their neighbors thought of matters."

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BLACK CLOTH AUTUMN COSTUME FROM HARPER'S BAZAR.

A new gown of light-weight cloth in black, now so stylish for autumn wear, is rendered very striking by the addition of a fancifully cut velvet vest in copper color, over which falls front and back a fine pleating of shaded taffeta all in lighter tones.

The close-fitting coat-shaped bodice, which promises to be one of the distinguishing features of the season, rounds down from the shoulder to under the arms like a bolero, which is also edged with the finely pleated frill. The coat opens at the neck on a square plastron and a great cravat bow of copper-tinted mull, and is fastened between the arms of the bolero front with gold-rimmed oval buttons. The coat is cut to form tiny epaulettes over the sleeves, and the divisions of the open back, which are caught together by the narrow pointed skirt is attached in front with similar jeweled buttons. A shaped collar finishes the neck, since the coat of waist without a very high collar is the exception. The close-fitting sleeves, opening at the wrist in bell shape, are trimmed with a fan frill of taffeta and little buttons.

The skirt, cut in the fashionable three-quarter mode, is attached to a foundation of silk—a new model—the pattern of which is furnished in connection with that of the skirt. The skirt has deep pleats at the back, and its width yards. The only trimming employed is a double machine-stitching on the edges. The proper cut of this gown can be obtained from the cut patterns published by Harper's Bazar, where the design of the gown appears.

The hat, which turns broadly back on the left side, and is faced with shirred rosette of copper-colored velvet fastened by a jeweled pin, and the crown is encircled by heavy black plumes.

Quantity of material for costume—8 yards of cloth 53 inches wide, 1 yard of velvet, 2½ yards of silk.



TROOPS LANDING AT MONTAUK POINT. FEEDING THE SOLDIERS. FROM HARPER'S WEEKLY.

After a Drawing by W. A. Rogers. Reproduced from Harper's Weekly. By Permission. Copyright, 1893, by Harper & Brothers.

## FINANCE AND TRADE.

The Features of the Money and Stock Markets.

NEW YORK, Sept. 9.—Money on call firm at 2½ to 3 per cent; last loan 3 per cent. Prime mercantile paper 4½ to 5 per cent. Sterling exchange firm, with actual business in bankers' bills at \$144½ to \$145 for demand and at \$144 to \$144½ for sixty days; posted at \$143½ to \$144 and at \$143 to \$143½. Commercial bills at \$144 to \$144½. Silver certificates 60½ to 61. Mexican dollars 46½.

There was further drastic liquidation in the stock market to-day at an exchange of 2½ per share in a great many cases. Disappointment over the fixing of the St. Paul dividend and the prevailing influence and not attention was paid to favorable developments or to the indications of an easier condition in money. The selling was evidently in the nature of speculative profit taking and came from an element that has persisted in the confidence that prices were certain of a further advance. A great part of this confidence has been based on the supposition that the St. Paul dividend would be increased and would awaken general activity and widespread outside interest.

Northwestern—11½ to 12½. Tenn. Coal & Iron—11½ to 12½. Do preferred—11½ to 12½. Northern Pacific—11½ to 12½. Do preferred—11½ to 12½. Western Union—11½ to 12½. Do preferred—11½ to 12½.

Headstamps and Provisions.

CHICAGO—The strength of cash wheat in the northwest to-day, in addition to a reported shortage of the Russian crop caused a sharp fall in wheat values here. September closed at \$1.41½ higher and December gained 1½¢. Corn improved ½¢. Oats rose ½¢. Provisions ruled weak. Pork at 10½¢. Lard at 10½¢. Sugar at 10½¢. Coffee at 10½¢. Beans at 10½¢. Rice at 10½¢. Tea at 10½¢. Spices at 10½¢. Fruits at 10½¢. Vegetables at 10½¢. Meats at 10½¢. Fish at 10½¢. Poultry at 10½¢. Eggs at 10½¢. Butter at 10½¢. Cheese at 10½¢. Canned goods at 10½¢. Miscellaneous at 10½¢.

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et as was the case with the increase in the Burlington dividend. There was a short-lived period of firmness in price in the day on a demand to cover some of the shorts put out yesterday. This movement was encouraged by the failure of the London market to reflect any violent depression on account of the St. Paul dividend, but the advance in prices was met by continued heavy offerings and by noon the movement threw over stocks was in full force again and prices were tumbling throughout the list. Early prices in a few special cases were almost completely wiped out. Among those stocks which have recently been subject to attack on account of individual claims of weakness there was a noticeable hesitancy on the part of the bears about putting out short lines.

Manhattan and Brooklyn Transit were conspicuous examples. It was not evident that these commitments were either on the short or the long side were in order and the activity of the market was almost entirely liquidation of the money market. There was also some disposition to apply the ultra-conservative standard adopted by the St. Paul directors to some other properties, which have made more liberal distributions of expanded earnings, and to question somewhat the integrity of the dividends thus established. The distinctly easier tone in money in the afternoon brought recovery in prices aside from the due to covering by the room traders. How far the easier tone in money is due to the increase in new government bonds available as security for the contraction of loans incident to the stock market liquidation itself is not clear. The reduction of the call loan rate to 4 per cent resulted in the steadying of the foreign exchange and a check to the advance of the London money rate. New York banks continue to lose cash very heavily to the sub-treasury and the shipments of currency to the interior show a large increase over those of last week.

The bond market showed the effects of the liquidation though to a less degree than in stocks. Total sales, \$4,000,000.

The total sales of stocks to-day were 570,700 shares.

United States 2½ advanced ¼ and the new 4½ ¼ cent, while the 3s when issued, declined ¼ per cent in the bid price. There were large dealings in the 3s at from 10½ to 10¾ at the close.

## BONDS AND STOCK QUOTATIONS.

U. S. coupon, 112½	Rock Island, 125½	Corn, No. 1, 80½
U. S. coupon, 112½	Rock Island, 125½	Dec., 80½
U. S. 4s, 112½	St. Paul, 125½	Dec., 80½
U. S. 4s, 112½	St. Paul, 125½	Dec., 80½
U. S. 4s, 112½	St. Paul, 125½	Dec., 80½
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Wheat, No. 2, 65½ to 66½. Corn, No. 2, 22½ to 23½. Oats, No. 2, 17½ to 18½. Soybeans, No. 2, 12½ to 13½. Cotton, No. 2, 10½ to 11½. Sugar, No. 2, 10½ to 11½. Coffee, No. 2, 10½ to 11½. Tea, No. 2, 10½ to 11½. Spices, No. 2, 10½ to 11½. Fruits, No. 2, 10½ to 11½. Vegetables, No. 2, 10½ to 11½. Meats, No. 2, 10½ to 11½. Fish, No. 2, 10½ to 11½. Poultry, No. 2, 10½ to 11½. Eggs, No. 2, 10½ to 11½. Butter, No. 2, 10½ to 11½. Cheese, No. 2, 10½ to 11½. Canned goods, No. 2, 10½ to 11½. Miscellaneous, No. 2, 10½ to 11½.

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